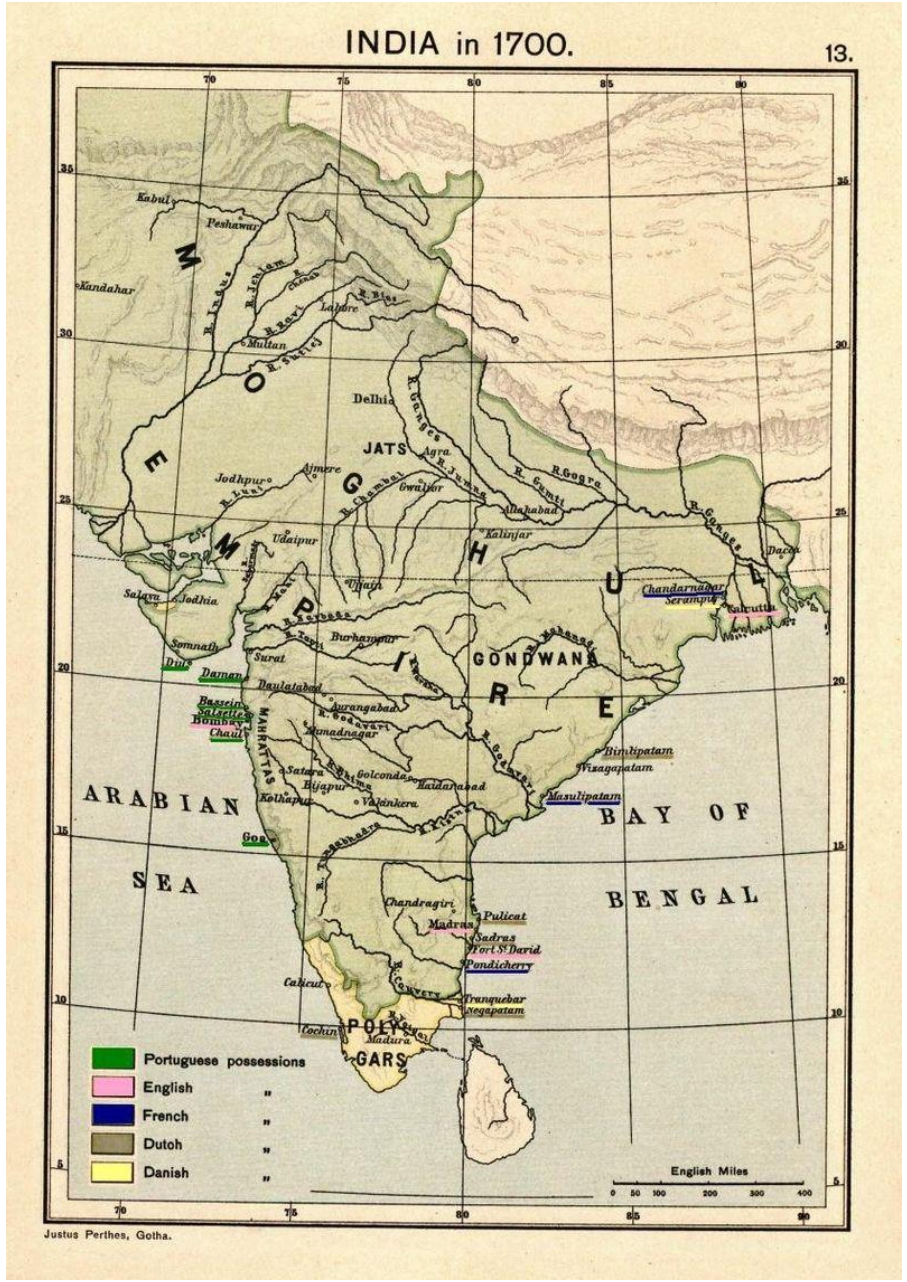
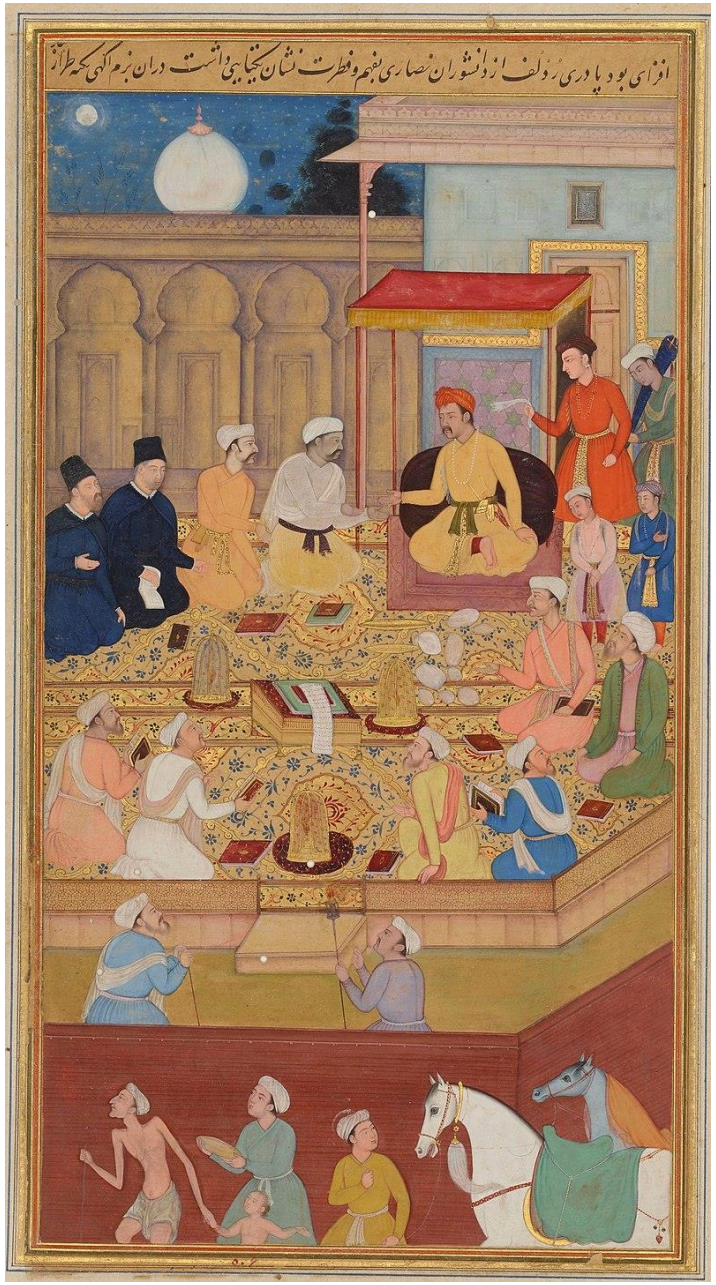


Mughal Empire



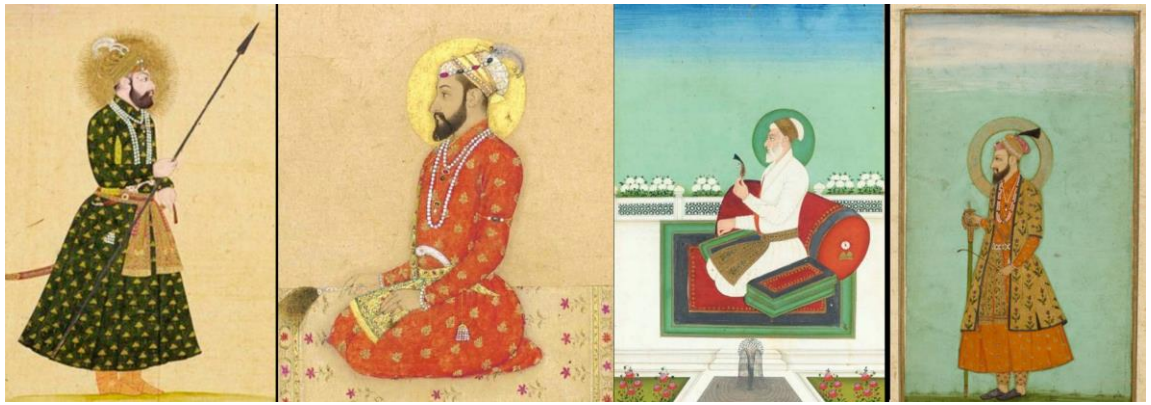
Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire was an early modern empire in South Asia. At its peak, the empire stretched from the outer fringes of the Indus River Basin in the west, northern Afghanistan in the northwest, and Kashmir in the north, to the highlands of present-day Assam and Bangladesh in the east, and the uplands of the Deccan Plateau in South India.

The Mughal Empire is conventionally said to have been founded in 1526 by Babur, a Timurid chieftain from Transoxiana, who employed aid from the neighbouring Safavid and Ottoman Empires to defeat the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, in the First Battle of Panipat, and to sweep down the plains of North India. The Mughal imperial structure, however, is sometimes dated to 1600, to the rule of Babur's grandson, Akbar. This imperial structure lasted until 1720, shortly after the death of the last major emperor, Aurangzeb, during whose reign the empire also achieved its maximum geographical extent. Reduced subsequently to the region in and around Old Delhi by 1760, the empire was formally dissolved by the British Raj after the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

Although the Mughal Empire was created and sustained by military warfare, it did not vigorously suppress the cultures and peoples it came to rule; rather it equalized and placated them through new administrative practices, and diverse ruling elites, leading to more efficient, centralised, and standardized rule. The base of the empire's collective wealth was agricultural taxes, instituted by the third Mughal emperor, Akbar. These taxes, which amounted to well over half the output of a peasant cultivator were paid in the well-regulated silver currency, and caused peasants and artisans to enter larger markets.

Mughal Empire



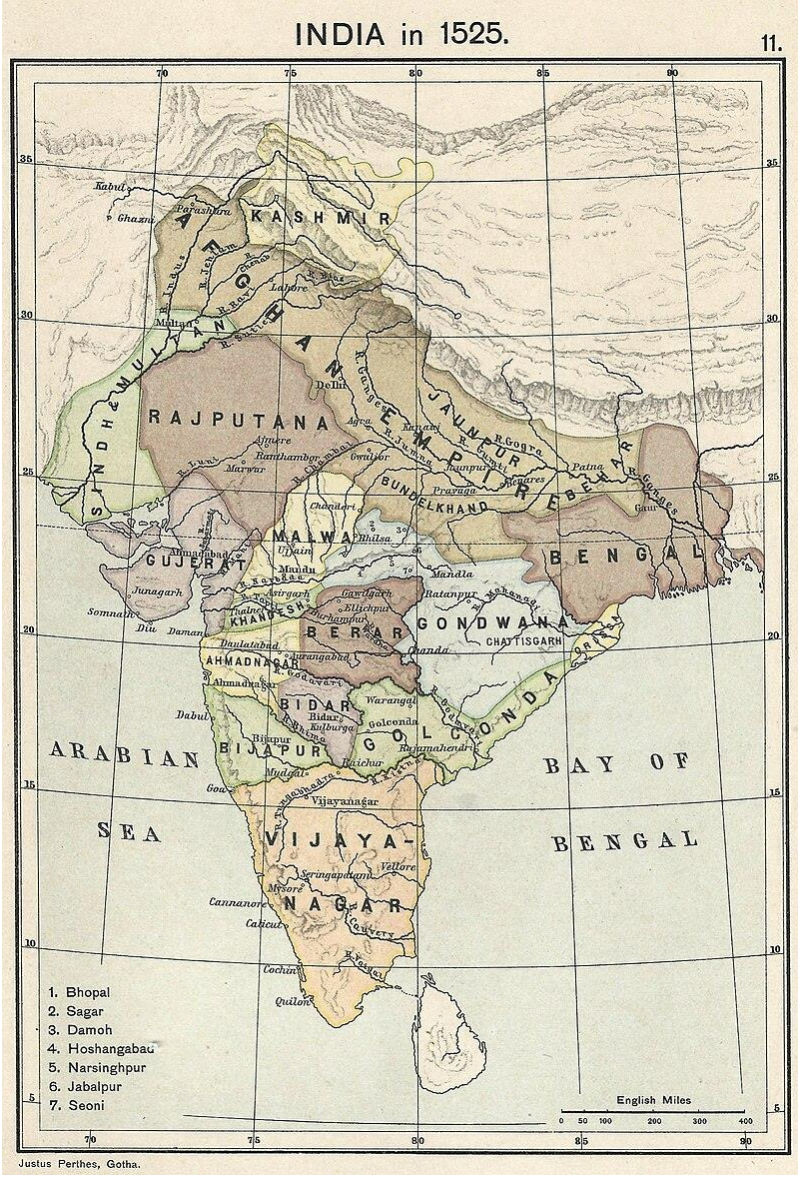
Mughal Empire

The relative peace maintained by the empire during much of the 17th century was a factor in India's economic expansion. The burgeoning European presence in the Indian Ocean and an increasing demand for Indian raw and finished products generated much wealth for the Mughal court. There was more conspicuous consumption among the Mughal elite, resulting in greater patronage of painting, literary forms, textiles, and architecture, especially during the reign of Shah Jahan. Among the Mughal UNESCO World Heritage Sites in South Asia are: Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, Lahore Fort, Shalamar Gardens, and the Taj Mahal, which is described as "the jewel of Muslim art in India, and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage.

The closest to an official name for the empire was Hindustan, which was documented in the Ain-i-Akbari. Mughal administrative records also refer to the empire as "dominion of Hindustan" (Wilāyat-i-Hindustān), "country of Hind" (Bilād-i-Hind), "Sultanate of Al-Hind" (Salṭanat(i) al-Hindīyyah) as observed in the epithet of Emperor Aurangzeb or endonymous identification from emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as "Land of Hind" (Hindostān) in Hindustani. Contemporary Chinese chronicles referred to the empire as Hindustan (Héndūsītǎn). In the west, the term "Mughal" was used for the emperor, and by extension, the empire as a whole.
The Mughal designation for their dynasty was Gurkani (Gūrkāniyān), a reference to their descent from the Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur, who took the title Gūrkān 'son-in-law' after his marriage to a Chinggisid princess.[34] The word Mughal (also spelled Mogul or Moghul in English) is the Indo-Persian form of Mongol. The Mughal dynasty's early followers were Chagatai Turks and not Mongols. The term Mughal was applied to them in India by association with the Mongols and to distinguish them from the Afghan elite which ruled the Delhi Sultanate. The term remains disputed by Indologists. In Marshall Hodgson's view, the dynasty should be called Timurid/Timuri or Indo-Timurid.

Mughal Empire

Babur and Humayun (1526–1556)



The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur (reigned 1526–1530), a Central Asian ruler who was descended from the Persianized Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur (the founder of the Timurid Empire) on his father's side, and from Genghis Khan on his mother's side. Paternally, Babur belonged to the Turkicized Barlas tribe of Mongol origin. Ousted from his ancestral domains in Central Asia, Babur turned to India to satisfy his ambitions. He established himself in Kabul and then pushed steadily southward into India from Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass. Babur's forces defeated Ibrahim Lodi, Sultan of Delhi, in the First Battle of Panipat in 1526. Through his use of firearms and cannons, he was able to shatter Ibrahim's armies despite being at a numerical disadvantage, expanding his dominion up to the mid Indo-Gangetic Plain. After the battle, the centre of Mughal power shifted to Agra. In the decisive Battle of Khanwa, fought near Agra a year later, the Timurid forces of Babur defeated the combined Rajput armies of Rana Sanga of Mewar, with his native cavalry employing traditional flanking tactics.

Mughal Empire

The preoccupation with wars and military campaigns, however, did not allow the new emperor to consolidate the gains he had made in India. The instability of the empire became evident under his son, Humayun (reigned 1530–1556), who was forced into exile in Persia by the rebellious Sher Shah Suri (reigned 1540–1545). Humayun's exile in Persia established diplomatic ties between the Safavid and Mughal courts and led to increasing Persian cultural influence in the later restored Mughal Empire. Humayun's triumphant return from Persia in 1555 restored Mughal rule in some parts of India, but he died in an accident the next year.

Akbar to Aurangzeb (1556–1707)

Akbar (reigned 1556–1605) was born Jalal-ud-din Muhammad in the Rajput Umarkot Fort, to Humayun and his wife Hamida Banu Begum, a Persian princess. Akbar succeeded to the throne under a regent, Bairam Khan, who helped consolidate the Mughal Empire in India.

Humayun at Herat

Mughal Empire

Through warfare, Akbar was able to extend the empire in all directions and controlled almost the entire Indian subcontinent north of the Godavari River. He created a new ruling elite loyal to him, implemented a modern administration, and encouraged cultural developments. He increased trade with European trading companies. India developed a strong and stable economy, leading to commercial expansion and economic development. Akbar allowed freedom of religion at his court and attempted to resolve socio-political and cultural differences in his empire by establishing a new religion, Din-i-Ilahi, with strong characteristics of a ruler cult. He left his son an internally stable state, which was in the midst of its golden age, but before long signs of political weakness would emerge.

Jahangir (born Salim, reigned 1605–1627) was born to Akbar and his wife Mariam-uz-Zamani, an Indian Rajput princess. Salim was named after the Indian Sufi saint, Salim Chishti. He "was addicted to opium, neglected the affairs of the state, and came under the influence of rival court cliques". Jahangir distinguished himself from Akbar by making substantial efforts to gain the support of the Islamic religious establishment.

One way he did this was by bestowing many more madad-i-ma'ash (tax-free personal land revenue grants given to religiously learned or spiritually worthy individuals) than Akbar had.

Mughal Empire

In contrast to Akbar, Jahangir came into conflict with non-Muslim religious leaders, notably the Sikh guru Arjan, whose execution was the first of many conflicts between the Mughal Empire and the Sikh community.

Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–1658) was born to Jahangir and his wife Jagat Gosain, a Rajput princess. His reign ushered in the golden age of Mughal architecture. During the reign of Shah Jahan, the splendour of the Mughal court reached its peak, as exemplified by the Taj Mahal. The cost of maintaining the court, however, began to exceed the revenue coming in. His reign was called as "The Golden Age of Mughal Architecture". Shah Jahan extended the Mughal Empire to the Deccan by ending the Ahmadnagar Sultanate and forcing the Adil Shahis and Qutb Shahis to pay tribute.

Shah Jahan's eldest son, the liberal Dara Shikoh, became regent in 1658, as a result of his father's illness. Dara championed a syncretistic Hindu-Muslim culture, emulating his great-grandfather Akbar. With the support of the Islamic orthodoxy, however, a younger son of Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), seized the throne. Aurangzeb defeated Dara in 1659 and had him executed. Although Shah Jahan fully recovered from his illness, Aurangzeb kept Shah Jahan imprisoned until he died in 1666. Aurangzeb brought the empire to its greatest territorial extent, and oversaw an increase in the Islamicization of the Mughal state. He encouraged conversion to Islam, reinstated the jizya on non-Muslims, and compiled the Fatawa 'Alamgiri, a collection of Islamic law. Aurangzeb also ordered the execution of the Sikh guru Tegh Bahadur, leading to the militarization of the Sikh community. From the imperial perspective, conversion to Islam integrated local elites into the king's vision of network of shared identity that would join disparate groups throughout the empire in obedience to the Mughal emperor

Mughal Empire

He led campaigns from 1682 in the Deccan, annexing its remaining Muslim powers of Bijapur and Golconda, though engaged in a prolonged conflict in the region which had a ruinous effect on the empire. The campaigns took a toll on the Mughal treasury, and Aurangzeb's absence led to a severe decline in governance, while stability and economic output in the Mughal Deccan plummeted.

Aurangzeb is considered the most controversial Mughal emperor, with some historians arguing his religious conservatism and intolerance undermined the stability of Mughal society, while other historians question this, noting that he built Hindu temples, employed significantly more Hindus in his imperial bureaucracy than his predecessors did, opposed bigotry against Hindus and Shia Muslims. Despite these allegations, it has been acknowledged that Emperor Aurangzeb enacted repressive policies towards non-Muslims. A major rebellion by the Marathas took place following this change, precipitated by the unmitigated state-building of its leader Shivaji in the Deccan.

Group portrait of Mughal rulers, from Babur to Aurangzeb, with the Mughal ancestor Timur seated in the middle. On the left: Shah Jahan, Akbar and Babur, with Abu Sa'id of Samarkand and Timur's son, Miran Shah. On the right: Aurangzeb, Jahangir and Humayun, and two of Timur's other offspring Umar Shaykh and Muhammad Sultan. Created c. 1707–12

Mughal Empire

Decline (1707–1857)

Mughal Empire

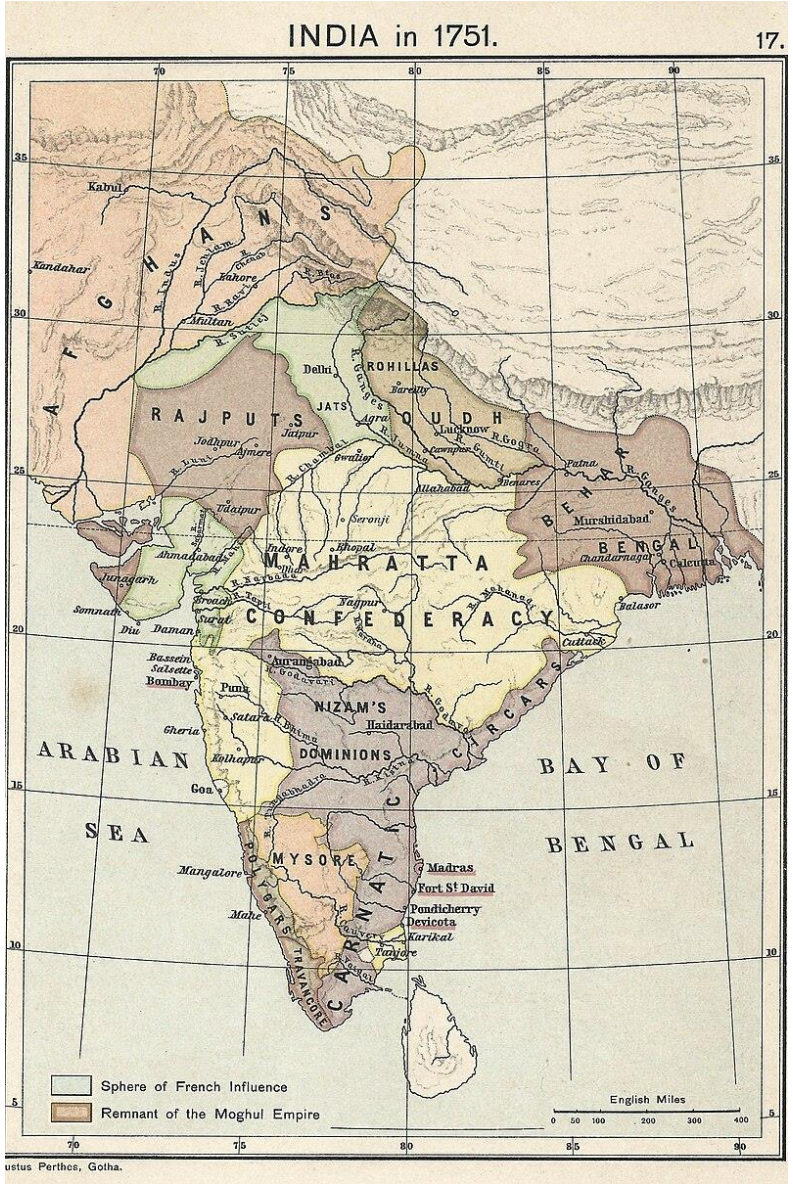
Aurangzeb's son, Bahadur Shah I, repealed the religious policies of his father and attempted to reform the administration. "However, after he died in 1712, the Mughal dynasty began to sink into chaos and violent feuds. In 1719 alone, four emperors successively ascended the throne", as figureheads under the rule of a brotherhood of nobles belonging to the Indian Muslim caste known as the Sadaat-e-Bara, whose leaders, the Sayyid Brothers, became the de facto sovereigns of the empire.

During the reign of Muhammad Shah (reigned 1719–1748), the empire began to break up, and vast tracts of central India passed from Mughal to Maratha hands. As the Mughals tried to suppress the independence of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I in the Deccan, he encouraged the Marathas to invade central and northern India. The Indian campaign of Nader Shah, who had previously reestablished Iranian suzerainty over most of West Asia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, culminated with the Sack of Delhi shattering the remnants of Mughal power and prestige, and taking off all the accumulated Mughal treasury. The Mughals could no longer finance the huge armies with which they had formerly enforced their rule. Many of the empire's elites now sought to control their affairs and broke away to form independent kingdoms. But lip service continued to be paid to the Mughal Emperor as the highest manifestation of sovereignty. Not only the Muslim gentry, but the Maratha, Hindu, and Sikh leaders took part in ceremonial acknowledgements of the emperor as the sovereign of India.

Meanwhile, some regional polities within the increasingly fragmented Mughal Empire involved themselves and the state in global conflicts, leading only to defeat and loss of territory during conflicts such as the Carnatic wars and Bengal War.
The Bengal War, also called the second Anglo-Mughal war, was waged by the Mughal Empire in order to to expel the British East India Company (EIC) from Bengal Subah. Hostilities began in 1763 and ended in 1765.

Mughal Empire

The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II (1759–1806) made futile attempts to reverse the Mughal decline. Delhi was sacked by the Afghans, and when the Third Battle of Panipat was fought between the Maratha Empire and the Afghans (led by Ahmad Shah Durrani) in 1761, in which the Afghans were victorious, the emperor had ignominiously taken temporary refuge with the British to the east. In 1771, the Marathas recaptured Delhi from the Rohillas, and in 1784 the Marathas officially became the protectors of the emperor in Delhi, a state of affairs that continued until the Second Anglo-Maratha War. Thereafter, the British East India Company became the protectors of the Mughal dynasty in Delhi. The British East India Company took control of the former Mughal province of Bengal-Bihar in 1793 after it abolished local rule (Nizamat) that lasted until 1858, marking the beginning of the British colonial era over the Indian subcontinent. By 1857 a considerable part of former Mughal India was under the East India Company's control. After a crushing defeat in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 which he nominally led, the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was deposed by the British East India Company and exiled in 1858 to Rangoon, Burma.



Mughal Empire

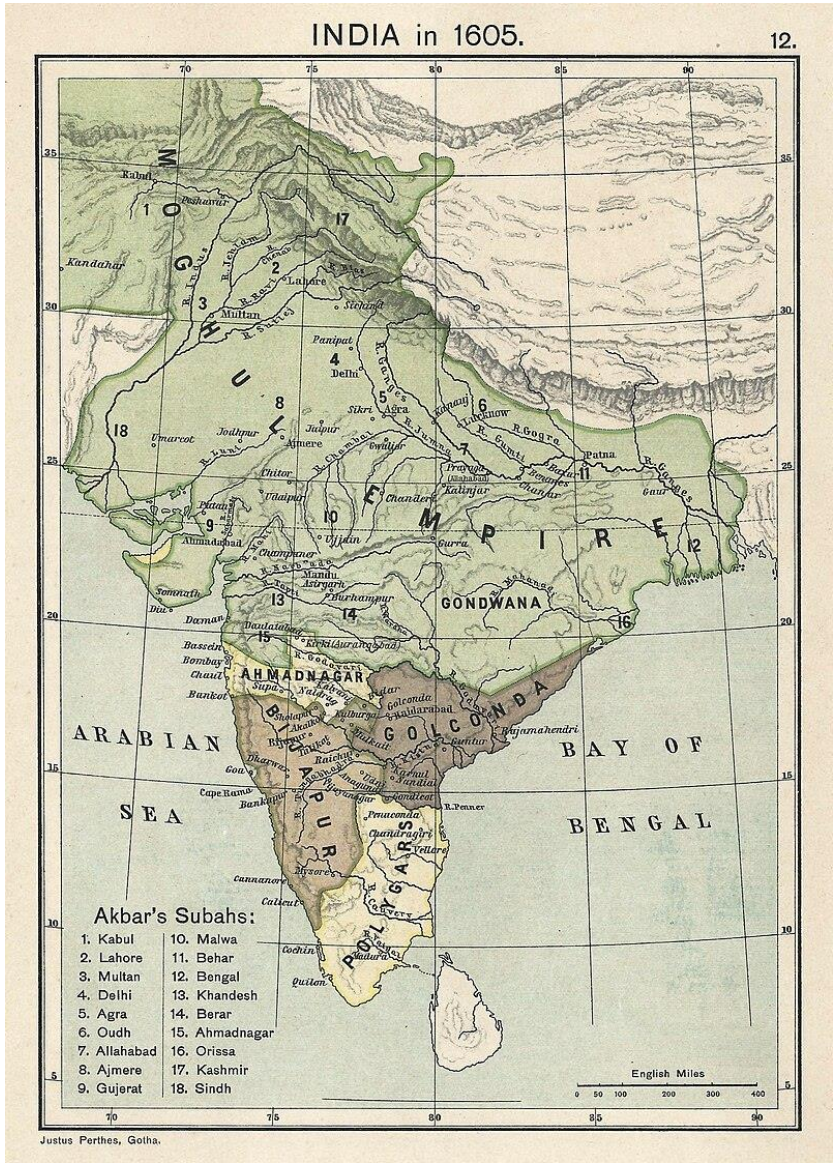
Portrait of Bahadur Shah Zafar

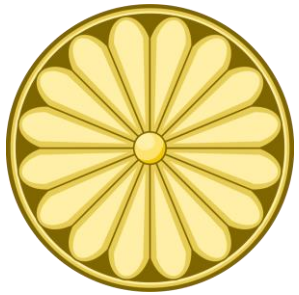
Causes of decline

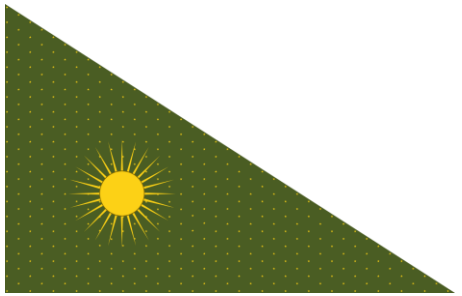
Historians have offered numerous accounts of the several factors involved in the rapid collapse of the Mughal Empire between 1707 and 1720, after a century of growth and prosperity. A succession of short-lived incompetent and weak rulers, and civil wars over the succession, created political instability at the centre. The Mughals appeared virtually unassailable during the 17th century but, once gone, their imperial overstretch became clear, and the situation could not be recovered. The seemingly innocuous European trading companies, such as the British East Indies Company, played no real part in the initial decline; they were still racing to get permission from the Mughal rulers to establish trades and factories in India. In fiscal terms, the throne lost the revenues needed to pay its chief officers, the emirs (nobles) and their entourages. The emperor lost authority, as the widely scattered imperial officers lost confidence in the central authorities, and made their deals with local men of influence. The imperial army bogged down in long, futile wars against the more aggressive Marathas, and lost its fighting spirit. Finally came a series of violent political feuds over control of the throne. After the execution of Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1719, local Mughal successor states took power in region after region

Mughal Empire

Administration and state







The government of the Mughal Empire was a highly centralised bureaucracy, most of which was instituted during the rule of the third Mughal emperor, Akbar. The central government was headed by the Mughal emperor; immediately beneath him were four ministries. The finance/revenue ministry was responsible for controlling revenues from the empire's territories, calculating tax revenues, and using this information to distribute assignments. The ministry of the military (army/intelligence) was headed by an official titled mir bakhshi, who was in charge of military organisation, messenger service, and the mansabdari system. The ministry in charge of law/religious patronage was the responsibility of the sadr as-sudr, who appointed judges and managed charities and stipends. Another ministry was dedicated to the imperial household and public works.

Mughal Empire

Administrative divisions

The empire was divided into Subah (provinces), each of which was headed by a provincial governor called a subadar. The structure of the central government was mirrored at the provincial level; each suba had its own bakhshi, sadr as-sudr, and finance minister that reported directly to the central government rather than the subahdar. Subas were subdivided into administrative units known as sarkars, which were further divided into groups of villages known as parganas. Mughal government in the pargana consisted of a Muslim judge and local tax collector. Parganas were the basic administrative unit of the Mughal Empire.

Mughal administrative divisions were not static. Territories were often rearranged and reconstituted for better administrative control, and to extend cultivation. For example, a sarkar could turn into a subah, and Parganas were often transferred between sarkars. The hierarchy of division was ambiguous sometimes, as a territory could fall under multiple overlapping jurisdictions. Administrative divisions were also vague in their geography – the Mughal state did not have enough resources or authority to undertake detailed land surveys, and hence the geographical limits of these divisions were not formalised and maps were not created. The Mughals instead recorded detailed statistics about each division, to assess the territory's capacity for revenue, based on simpler land surveys.

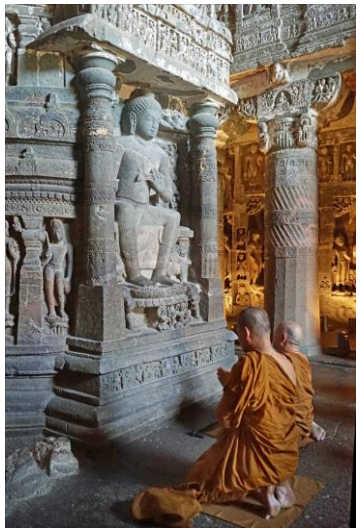
Mughal ranks included the Nawab, Subahdar, Mansabdar, Sawar and Sepoy. Mughal princes were often given the titles of Mir and Mirza

Mughal Empire

Capitals

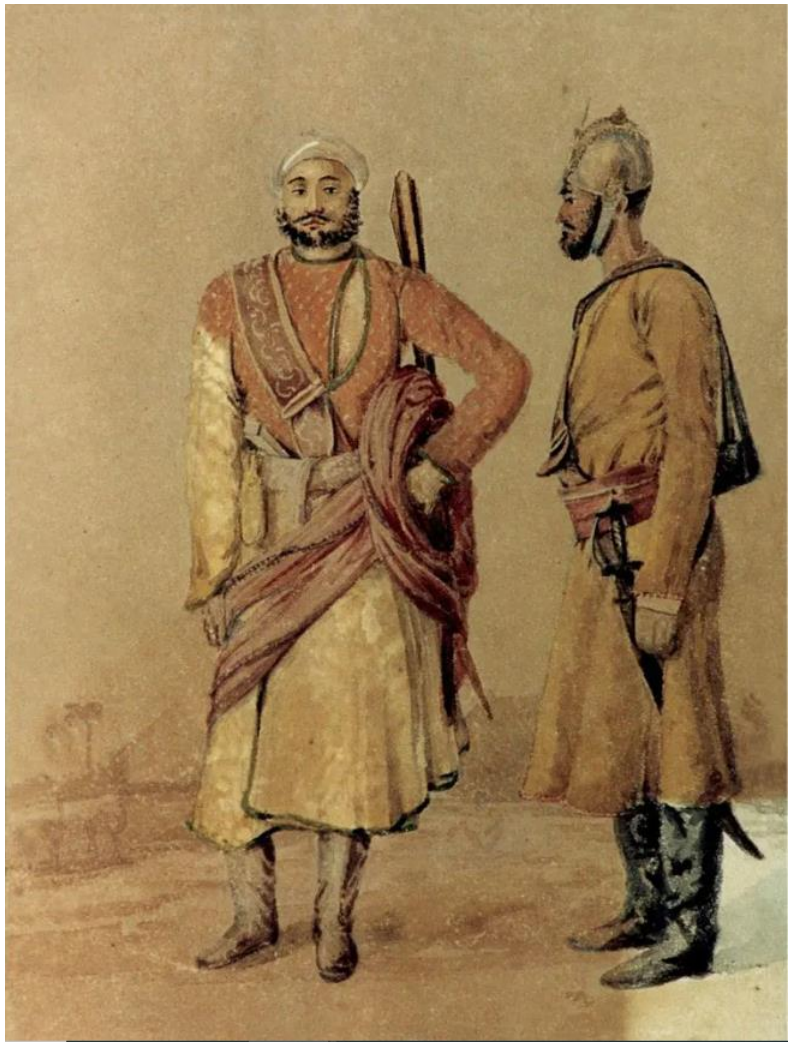
The Mughals had multiple imperial capitals, established throughout their rule. These were the cities of Agra, Delhi, Lahore, and Fatehpur Sikri. Power often shifted back and forth between these capitals. Sometimes this was necessitated by political and military demands, but shifts also occurred for ideological reasons (for example, Akbar's establishment of Fatehpur Sikri), or even simply because the cost of establishing a new capital was marginal. Situations where two simultaneous capitals happened multiple times in Mughal history. Certain cities also served as short-term, provincial capitals, as was the case with Aurangzeb's shift to Aurangabad in the Deccan. Kabul was the summer capital of Mughals from 1526 to 1681.

The imperial camp, used for military expeditions and royal tours, also served as a kind of mobile, "de facto" administrative capital. From the time of Akbar, Mughal camps were huge in scale, accompanied by numerous personages associated with the royal court, as well as soldiers and labourers. All administration and governance were carried out within them. The Mughal Emperors spent a significant portion of their ruling period within these camps. After Aurangzeb, the Mughal capital definitively became the walled city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi).



Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire's legal system was context-specific and evolved throughout the empire's rule. Being a Muslim state, the empire employed fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and therefore the fundamental institutions of Islamic law such as those of the qadi (judge), mufti (jurisconsult), and muhtasib (censor and market supervisor) were well-established in the Mughal Empire. However, the dispensation of justice also depended on other factors, such as administrative rules, local customs, and political convenience. This was due to Persianate influences on Mughal ideology, and that the Mughal Empire governed a non-Muslim majority. Scholar Mouez Khalfaoui notes that legal institutions in the Mughal Empire systemically suffered from the corruption of local judges.



Police in Delhi under Bahadur Shah II, 1842

Mughal Empire

Legal ideology

The Mughal Empire followed the Sunni Hanafi system of jurisprudence. In its early years, the empire relied on Hanafi legal references inherited from its predecessor, the Delhi Sultanate. These included the al-Hidayah (the best guidance) and the Fatawa al-Tatarkhaniyya (religious decisions of the Emire Tatarkhan). During the Mughal Empire's peak, the Fatawa 'Alamgiri was commissioned by Emperor Aurangzeb. This compendium of Hanafi law sought to serve as a central reference for the Mughal state that dealt with the specifics of the South Asian context.

The Mughal Empire also drew on Persian notions of kingship. Particularly, this meant that the Mughal emperor was considered the supreme authority on legal affairs.

Courts of law

Various kinds of courts existed in the Mughal Empire. One such court was that of the qadi. The Mughal qadi was responsible for dispensing justice; this included settling disputes, judging people for crimes, and dealing with inheritances and orphans. The qadi also had additional importance in documents, as the seal of the qadi was required to validate deeds and tax records. Qadis did not constitute a single position, but made up a hierarchy. For example, the most basic kind was the pargana (district) qadi. More prestigious positions were those of the qadi al-quddat (judge of judges) who accompanied the mobile imperial camp, and the qadi-yi lashkar (judge of the army). Qadis were usually appointed by the emperor or the sadr-us-sudr (chief of charities). The jurisdiction of the qadi was availed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Mughal Empire

The Mughal economy was large and prosperous. India was producing 24.5% of the world's manufacturing output up until 1750. Mughal India's economy has been described as a form of proto-industrialization, like that of 18th-century Western Europe before the Industrial Revolution.

Modern historians and researchers generally agree that the character of the Mughal Empire's economic policy resembles the laissez-faire system in dealing with trade and billions to achieve the economic ends.

The Mughals were responsible for building an extensive road system and creating a uniform currency. The empire had an extensive road network, which was vital to the economic infrastructure, built by a public works department set up by the Mughals which designed, constructed and maintained roads linking towns and cities across the empire, making trade easier to conduct. The main base of the empire's collective wealth was agricultural taxes, instituted by the third Mughal emperor, Akbar. These taxes, which amounted to well over half the output of a peasant cultivator, were paid in the well-regulated silver currency, and caused peasants and artisans to enter larger markets. In circa 1595, Modern historians estimated the state's annual revenues of the Mughal Empire were around 99,000,000 rupees.

The Mughals adopted and standardised the rupee (rupiya, or silver) and dam (copper) currencies introduced by Sur Emperor Sher Shah Suri during his brief rule. The Mughals minted coins with high purity, never dropping below 96%, and without debasement until the 1720s

Mughal Empire

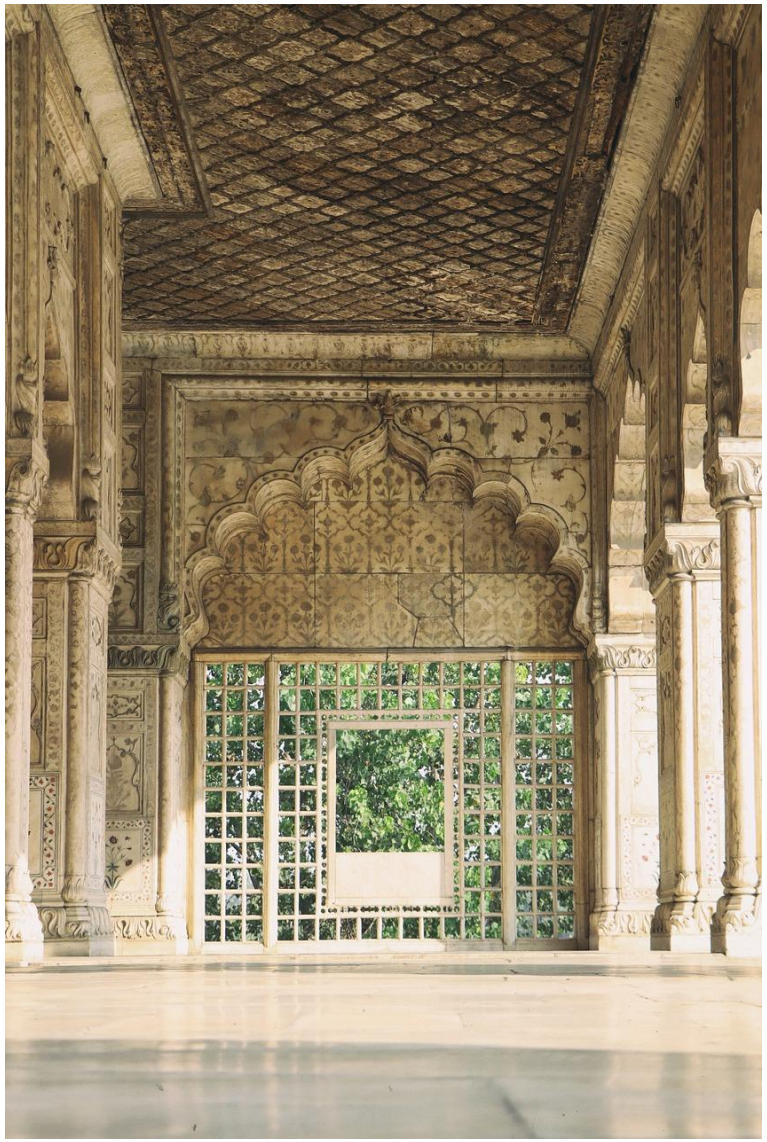
Despite India having its stocks of gold and silver, the Mughals produced minimal gold of their own but mostly minted coins from imported bullion, as a result of the empire's strong export-driven economy, with global demand for Indian agricultural and industrial products drawing a steady stream of precious metals into India.

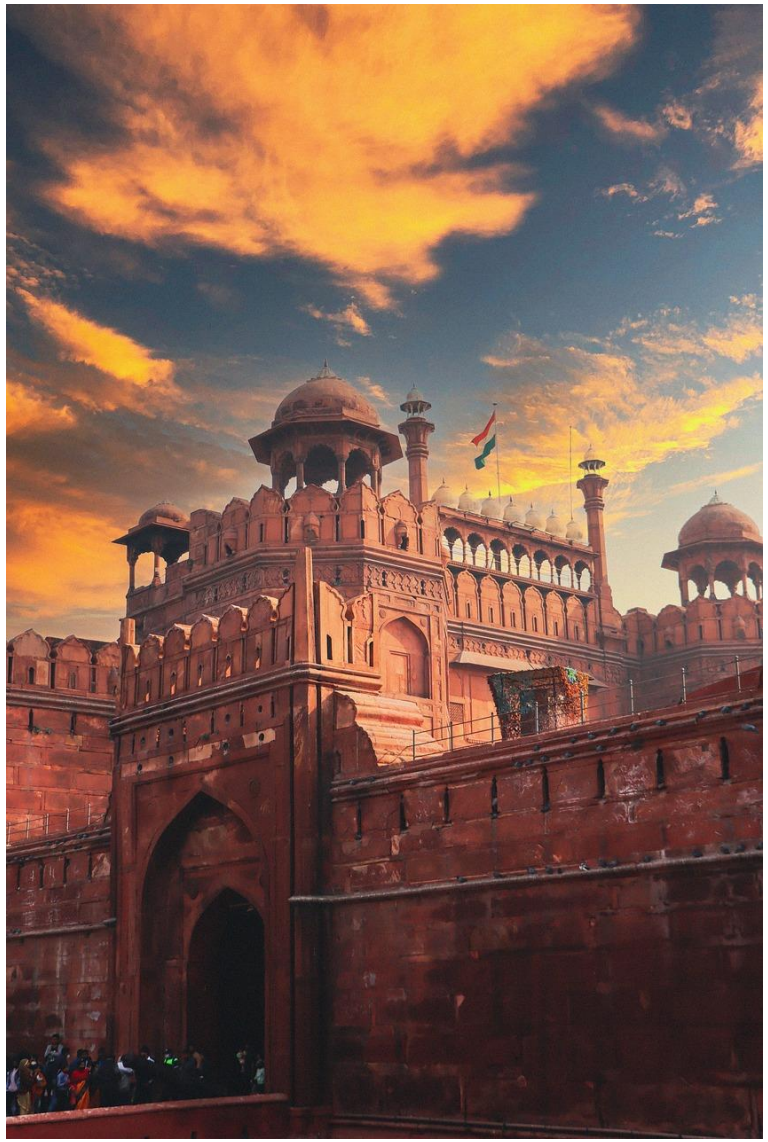
Labour

The historian Shireen Moosvi estimates that in terms of contributions to the Mughal economy, in the late 16th century, the primary sector contributed 52%, the secondary sector 18% and the tertiary sector 29%; the secondary sector contributed a higher percentage than in early 20th-century British India, where the secondary sector only contributed 11% to the economy. In terms of the urban-rural divide, 18% of Mughal India's labour force were urban and 82% were rural, contributing 52% and 48% to the economy, respectively.

According to Moosvi, Mughal India had a per-capita income, in terms of wheat, 1.24% higher in the late 16th century than British India did in the early 20th century. This income, however, would have to be revised downwards if manufactured goods, like clothing, would be considered. Compared to food per capita, expenditure on clothing was much smaller though, so relative income between 1595 and 1596 should be comparable to 1901–1910. However, in a system where wealth was hoarded by elites, wages were depressed for manual labour. While slavery also existed, it was limited largely to household servants.

Mughal Empire





Mughal Empire

Agriculture

Indian agricultural production increased under the Mughal Empire. A variety of crops were grown, including food crops such as wheat, rice, and barley, and non-food cash crops such as cotton, indigo and opium. By the mid-17th century, Indian cultivators began to extensively grow two new crops from the Americas, maize and tobacco.

The Mughal administration emphasised the agrarian reform that began under the non-Mughal emperor Sher Shah Suri, which Akbar adopted and furthered with more reforms. The civil administration was organised hierarchically based on merit, with promotions based on performance. The Mughal government funded the building of irrigation systems across the empire, which produced much higher crop yields and increased the net revenue base, leading to increased agricultural production.

A major Mughal reform introduced by Akbar was a new land revenue system called zabt. He replaced the tribute system, previously common in India and used by Tokugawa Japan at the time, with a monetary tax system based on a uniform currency. The revenue system was biased in favour of higher value cash crops such as cotton, indigo, sugar cane, tree crops, and opium, providing state incentives to grow cash crops, in addition to rising market demand. Under the zabt system, the Mughals also conducted extensive cadastral surveying to assess the area of land under plough cultivation, with the Mughal state encouraging greater land cultivation by offering tax-free periods to those who brought new land under cultivation. The expansion of agriculture and cultivation continued under later Mughal emperors including Aurangzeb

Mughal Empire

Mughal agriculture was in some ways advanced compared to European agriculture at the time, exemplified by the common use of the seed drill among Indian peasants before its adoption in Europe. Geared sugar rolling mills first appeared in Mughal India, using the principle of rollers as well as worm gearing, by the 17th century.

Industrial manufacturing

South Asia during the Mughal's rule was a very fertile ground for manufacturing technologies coveted by the Europeans before the Industrial Revolution. Up until 1750, India produced about 25% of the world's industrial output.

Manufactured goods and cash crops from the Mughal Empire were sold throughout the world. The growth of manufacturing industries in the Indian subcontinent during the Mughal era in the 17th–18th centuries has been referred to as a form of proto-industrialization, similar to 18th-century Western Europe before the Industrial Revolution.

In early modern Europe, there was significant demand for products from Mughal India, particularly cotton textiles, as well as goods such as spices, peppers, indigo, silks, and saltpetre (for use in munitions). European fashion, for example, became increasingly dependent on Mughal Indian textiles and silks.

The largest manufacturing industry in the Mughal Empire was textile manufacturing, particularly cotton textile manufacturing, which included the production of piece goods, calicos, and muslins.

Mughal Empire

Muslim Lady Reclining or An Indian Girl with a Hookah, painted in Dacca, 18th century

Mughal Empire

The production of cotton was advanced by the diffusion of the spinning wheel across India shortly before the Mughal era, lowering the costs of yarn and helping to increase demand for cotton. The diffusion of the spinning wheel and the incorporation of the worm gear and crank handle into the roller cotton gin led to greatly expanded Indian cotton textile production during the Mughal era.

The cotton textile industry was responsible for a large part of the empire's international trade. India had a 25% share of the global textile trade in the early 18th century, and it represented the most important manufactured goods in world trade in the 18th century. The most important centre of cotton production was the Bengal province, particularly around its capital city of Dhaka.

Mughal Empire

Ruins of the Great Caravanserai in Dhaka.

The Bengal Subah province was especially prosperous from the time of its takeover by the Mughals in 1590 until the British East India Company seized control in 1757. Historian C. A. Bayly wrote that it was probably the Mughal Empire's wealthiest province. Domestically, much of India depended on Bengali products such as rice, silks and cotton textiles. Overseas, Europeans depended on Bengali products such as cotton textiles, silks, and opium. The province was a leading producer of grains, salt, fruits, liquors and wines, precious metals and ornaments.

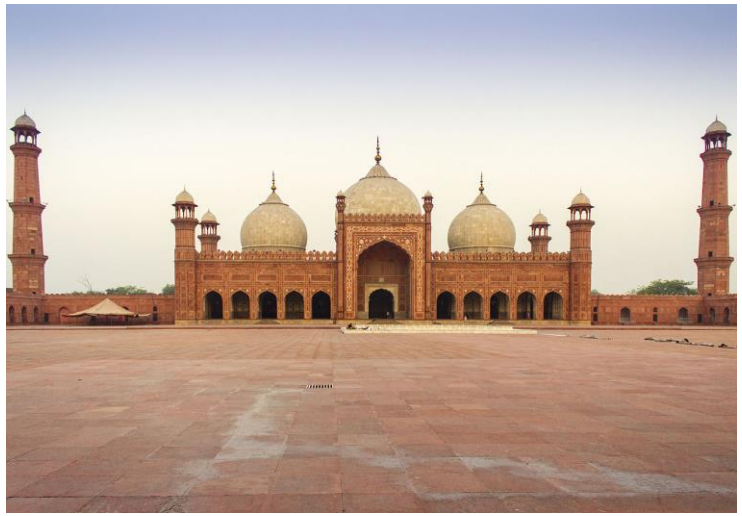
After 150 years of rule by Mughal viceroys, Bengal gained de-facto independence as a dominion under Murshid Quli Khan, the first Nawab of Bengal in 1717. The Nawabs permitted European companies to set up trading posts across the region, which regarded Bengal as the richest place for trade.

Mughal Empire

Shipbuilding industry

Mughal India had a large shipbuilding industry, which was also largely centred in the Bengal province. Economic historian Indrajit Ray estimates the shipbuilding output of Bengal during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at 223,250 tons annually, compared with 23,061 tons produced in nineteen colonies in North America from 1769 to 1771. He also assesses ship repairing as very advanced in Bengal.

India's population growth accelerated under the Mughal Empire, with an unprecedented economic and demographic upsurge which boosted the Indian population by 60% to 253% in 200 years during 1500–1700. The Indian population had a faster growth during the Mughal era than at any known point in Indian history before the Mughal era. By the time of Aurangzeb's reign, there were a total of 455,698 villages in the Mughal Empire.



Mughal Empire